

News Release

Sustainability Supper Unites the U of M, Crookston and the University of North Dakota around Sustainability Initiatives

By Itolfe on Monday, December 19, 2011

As university and college campuses work toward goals of climate neutrality and improved sustainability, the University of Minnesota, Crookston and the University of North Dakota (UND) staged a unique evening of sharing and discussion around this vital topic. A "sustainability supper" was held on Wednesday, December 14, 2011, at the UND Memorial Union in Grand Forks. Participants from Crookston included students, Jen Rasmussen, Jeanne Collins, and Beth Walter; Rich Connell, director of facilities and operations; Peter Phaiah, associate vice chancellor of student affairs; Kent Freberg, assistant professor in the Agriculture and Natural Resources Department; Linda Kingery, executive director of the Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership; Vicki Svedarsky, UMC counselor; and Dan Svedarsky, director of UMC's Center for Sustainability.



The supper began with a welcome by UND President Robert Kelley who noted that he was, "delighted that both campuses are making very good progress in addressing the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and exploring novel, innovative new energy sources in the process." Larry Zitzow, director of facility management at UND, provided an overview of sustainability initiatives at UND with special emphasis on implementation strategies for their Climate Action Plan and improvements in energy efficiency. A couple of years ago, a UND campus input session generated over 90 possible sustainability and energy efficiency projects. Three selection criteria have been applied to choose which to do; 1) return on investment, 2) greenhouse gas reduction, and 3) in line with UND's sustainability efforts.



A similar overview for the Crookston campus was provided by Svedarsky, Connell, Phaiah, and Kingery. The session provided an opportunity for networking between the two campuses as far as student groups, curriculum initiatives, research possibilities, and facilities management. Kylie Oversen, UND's student body president noted that she was excited with the possibilities of more interdisciplinary student involvement in sustainability and with the themes of landscaping and faith-based approaches to land stewardship. Juan Pedraza, UND University Relations, reflected back on growing up near Lisbon, Spain, where, "I didn't know what garbage was. Everything was used and re-used." The evening concluded with a discussion around maintaining synergy

between the two campuses as they work toward a sustainable future, figure out ways to improve energy efficiency and save money, and collaborate.

Background

In June 2010, U of M, Crookston Chancellor Charles Casey approved an Action Plan for Climate Neutrality and Sustainability which outlines somewhat of a strategic plan for campus sustainability action. The plan sets a target date of 2030 to achieve a balance between carbon released (primarily in the form of carbon dioxide) and the amount trapped or not produced; primarily by conserving energy and shifting to renewable sources. The plan is far reaching and extends not only to energy conservation and efficiency issues directly, but also to transportation, communication, local foods, recycling, and interdisciplinary education approaches. These climate action plans are part of the requirements of campuses signing on to the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment (ACUPCC), which the University of Minnesota agreed to in 2008. Colleges and universities have a special responsibility to provide a leadership role in this regard according to Michael Crow, president of Arizona State University and one of the founders of ACUPCC. "While college and university campuses across the country are, in aggregate, responsible for only about three percent of the total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions emitted by the U.S., we are educating 100 percent of our future political, business, and social leaders. This fact alone places significant accountability on higher education and its leaders to take action."

The Sustainability Supper initiative is sponsored by the University of Minnesota's Institute on Environment, Mini-Grant Program. Past themes have included international dimensions of sustainability, faith-based approaches to sustainability, and defining what the sustainability means. The system dynamics approach to complex decision making is the theme of the next meeting scheduled for UMC on January 31. One of the over-arching goals of the sustainability supper seminar series has been to better connect campuses to their community by creating a more functional, "Communiversity." In this way, participants will reach a deeper understanding of collaborative problem solving, sustainability and its many applications, strive toward a more functional "learning community," and seek ways for better synergy in the use of common resources. For more information about sustainability and communiversity initiatives, contact Dan Svedarsky, dsvedars@crk.umn.edu or 218-281-8129.

Today the University of Minnesota, Crookston delivers 26 bachelor's degree programs, 18 minors, and 36 concentrations, including 10 online degrees, in the areas of agriculture and natural resources; business; liberal arts and education; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of 1,600 undergraduates from 25 countries and 40 states, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit www.umcrookston.edu.

In the photos:

Top, right: Larry Zitzow explaining UND's climate action plan. Peter Johnson, UND director of Univirity Relations, President Robert Kelley.

Bottom, left: Peter Phaiah, Rich Connell, and Kent Freberg listen to UND student body president Kylie Oversen, outline her hopes for more student engagement in sustainability initiatives.

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